

VZCZCXRO8229
OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHLA RUEHMRE RUEHROV RUEHSL RUEHSR
DE RUEHNO #0303/01 1961718
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 151718Z JUL 09
FM USMISSION USNATO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3181
INFO RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNOSC/ORG FOR SECURITY CO OP IN EUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 6443
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USDELMC BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/USNMR SHAPE BE PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0961
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USNATO 000303

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/14/2019

TAGS: [NATO PREL RS GG UP](#)

SUBJECT: NATO-RUSSIA: ALLIES DIFFER ON RE-ENGAGEMENT, BUT
NOT IN PUBLIC

Classified By: Ambassador Ivo Daalder
for reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: NATO Allies are united that PermReps should use the July 22 meeting of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) to indicate to Russia that NATO is willing to engage across the entire spectrum of issues, but that Russia must also specify in what areas it would like to cooperate. Regardless of the outcome of the NRC meeting, the Allies are likely to disagree in subsequent internal discussions on the next steps. Several vocal Allies are already in favor of restarting all NRC working groups, allegedly to properly examine the scope for possible future areas of cooperation. Others remain determined that work should only follow once there is NRC agreement to cooperate on a particular issue. Unless instructed otherwise, USNATO, in addition to underlining the necessity to return to the topic of NRC reform, will continue to push for the practical approach that substance should precede process. End Summary

Allied working-level talks highlight divisions

¶2. (C) NATO Allies have used the period since the June 27 Corfu ministerial to consult extensively on the next steps in engaging Russia. Allies agree that the NRC meeting in Corfu had three outcomes: A) Agreement to continue work on reforming the NRC; B) Agreement to resume military to military cooperation in specific areas (Afghanistan, counter-terrorism, naval cooperation including search and rescue at sea, missile defense, and exchange of views on possible mutually beneficial cooperation on counter piracy) and; C) Agreement that there should be more high level political dialogue through the NRC. However, regardless of the unanimity on these general outcomes of Corfu, there are clear divisions on next steps. Several nations (led by Germany and Italy) want an immediate resumption of all bureaucratic working group activity, while others (led by the U.S. and Canada) want to develop more effective NRC than before, in areas where Russia indicates a clear interest. Ambassador Daalder's discussions with key PermReps on this issue led to a united Allied line during a July 14 working-level meeting with Russia. In that meeting, the U.S. made the following points, which were explicitly endorsed by several Allies, including Germany and Italy:

-- The members of the NRC, having already decided at Corfu that we will restart mil-mil cooperation, should use the upcoming NRC Ambassadorial to explore what areas we should focus on next.

-- We look forward to a substantive discussion and are particularly interested in hearing Russia's thoughts on where we should cooperate.

-- We believe that this approach would direct further NATO-Russia cooperation in a practical way, with mutual benefit for both the Allies and Russia.

-- Committees should look forward to hearing from the NRC Ambassadorial on the direction of our work together.

-- This approach is separate to the Corfu ministerial tasking on reforming the NRC. We should swiftly move to address that discussion to reform the NRC in a meaningful way that will make it a more functional and efficient vehicle for NATO-Russia cooperation.

Ambassadors fix the symptoms, but only temporarily

13. (C) An informal closed-door meeting of NATO PermReps on July 14 began with a clear split between those who wanted to restart all of the NRC working groups and subsidiary bodies

USNATO 00000303 002 OF 002

and those who wanted a clearer sense of what kinds of cooperation with Russia are possible. Ambassador Daalder, building on a series of private conversations with Italy, Norway, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, France, and Turkey, won consensus for a compromise along the following lines: At the July 22 Ambassadorial-level meeting of the NRC, NATO will make it clear to Russia that it is willing to engage across the entire spectrum of issues, while emphasizing that the ball is in Russia's court to identify to NATO the issues on which it wants to engage. Once these areas of possible cooperation have been identified, the NRC can decide to activate an existing working group or create a new one to pursue the way ahead in detail.

14. (C) The discussion, however, made clear that the current consensus is likely to last only until July 22. The German and Italian-led faction believe that Russia will request a comprehensive re-engagement of cooperation leading to a resumption of NRC activities using the same modalities that were in place prior to the 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict. Following the NRC Ambassadorial France and Germany, with likely support from Italy, Norway, and Spain, plan to insist that all NRC working groups restart their work, if only to determine whether there is potential for cooperation with Russia on the issues within each group's purview. Many of these nations are intent on using this approach to politically signal a return to a status quo ante NATO relationship with Russia. On the other hand, more skeptical countries (the most skeptical of which is Lithuania), advocate that working groups should meet only after there has been an agreement at the NRC or PrepCom to cooperate on a particular issue.

Russian levels of engagement

15. (C) In contrast to the hand wringing of Allies on this issue, most of the Russian Mission to NATO appears to have devoted little energy to following up on Corfu. In recent months, they have privately indicated that Moscow has been very slow to provide guidance. However, in a July 14 meeting of the NRC Military Committee, the Russian MilRep indicated willingness to begin cooperation on support to Afghanistan,

counternarcotics, counter terrorism, search and rescue, the Cooperative Airspace Initiative, and high level visits. He went on to say that further areas (including missile defense) were dependent on the guidance he gets from Moscow following the POTUS visit and the G-8 Summit.

Comment

¶6. (C) Substance should precede process. NATO should be working towards reforming the NRC in a way that focuses on practical cooperation rather than on reaffirming a failed NRC structure that conducted meetings for meetings, sake. Unless otherwise directed, USNATO will continue to make this point within NATO discussions, and will push for substance driven, engagement in practical areas of cooperation. USNATO will also work to keep the Corfu-mandated NRC reform process on the front burner.

¶7. (C) Though Russian Ambassador Rogozin is away from Brussels, Ambassador Daalder is exploring the PermRep-endorsed possibility of holding a conference call with Rogozin, joined by the PermReps of Italy, Germany, Canada, and Poland on the line. The aim would be to encourage Rogozin to come to the July 22 meeting with specific suggestions for cooperation, rather than just his typical political bluster.
DAALDER